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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A goods sales management system, comprising:
  - a plurality of vending machines, each of the vending machines having a container for storing a plurality of goods; and
  - a vending machine management apparatus for controlling the plurality of vending machines; the vending machine management apparatus being associated with each of the plurality of goods vending machines,
  - wherein said vending machine management apparatus comprises time information transmitting means for transmitting time as time information to each of the plurality of vending machines,
  - wherein each of said vending machines comprises:
    - time adjustment management means for managing time as time information and making the managed time coincide with said time information managed by and transmitted from the vending machine management apparatus;
    - goods delivering means for delivering the goods from the container;
    - delivered-goods number counting means for counting a number of the goods delivered by said goods delivering means;
    - goods number setting means for setting a maximum number of goods storable in the container according to a capacity of the container; and
    - information transmitting/receiving means for transmitting a request for restocking the goods to said vending machine management apparatus when a number obtained by subtracting the number counted by said delivered-goods number counting means from the number set by said goods number setting means is less than a predetermined number of remaining goods,
  - wherein said vending machine transmits said time information as well as said request for restocking the goods to said vending machine management apparatus,

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wherein said vending machine management apparatus transmits said time information managed thereby to said goods vending machine as a transmitter of said request for restocking the goods by said time information transmitting means when said request for restocking the goods is received,

wherein said time adjustment management means of said vending machine makes said time managed coincide with said time information transmitted from said vending machine management apparatus, [[and]]

wherein the predetermined number is dynamically calculated prior to each restocking based upon a predicted time that a product will be sold out, and wherein said predicted time is based on a rate of sales of said product since a previous restocking, the predetermined number being dynamically calculated prior to each restocking to permit restocking to occur before the product will be sold out

~~wherein the predetermined number is determined based on a predicted time that a product will be sold out, the predetermined number being determined to allow a restocking to occur before the product will be sold out.~~

2. (Previously Presented) The goods sales management system according to claim 1, said vending machine management apparatus further comprising response means for transmitting a response signal when receiving the request for restocking the goods.

3. (Previously Presented) The goods sales management system according to claim 1, wherein said plurality of containers of said vending machines each contains a plurality of kinds of goods in each container, and

wherein each of said vending machines further comprises a sales management unit for delivering the goods by said goods delivering means in accordance with a selecting operation of desired kinds of goods after receiving a payment.

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4. (Currently Amended) A goods sales management method, using a goods sales management system having a plurality of vending machines, each vending machine provided with a container for storing a plurality of goods and a vending machine management apparatus associated with each of the plurality of vending machines to control the plurality of vending machines, in which sales information of the goods in the plurality of goods vending machines is managed, said method comprising:

setting a maximum number of the goods storable in said container of said vending machine in accordance with a capacity of the container;

transmitting a request for restocking the goods and time information managed by said vending machine to said vending machine management apparatus when a number obtained by subtracting an actual number of the goods delivered by the vending machine from the maximum number of the goods set in the vending machine is less than a predetermined number of remaining goods;

transmitting time information managed by said vending machine management apparatus to the goods vending machine as a transmitter of said request for restocking the goods when receiving said request for restocking the goods; and

making said time information managed by said vending machine coincide with the time information transmitted from said vending machine management apparatus,

wherein the predetermined number is dynamically calculated prior to each restocking based upon a predicted time that a product will be sold out, and wherein said predicted time is based on a rate of sales of said product since a previous restocking, the predetermined number being dynamically calculated prior to each restocking to permit restocking to occur before the product will be sold out

~~wherein the predetermined number is determined based on a predicted time that a product will be sold out, the predetermined number being determined to allow a restocking to occur before~~

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~~the product will be sold out.~~

5. (Previously Presented) The goods sales management system according to claim 2, wherein said containers separately contain a plurality of kinds of goods in each container, and

wherein each of said vending machines further comprises a sales management unit for delivering the goods by said goods delivering means in accordance with a selecting operation of a desired good after a payment is complete.

6. (Previously Presented) The goods sales management system according to claim 1, wherein the vending machine management apparatus is associated with each of the plurality of vending machines through a communication line.

7. (Currently Amended) A vending machine management system, comprising a plurality of vending machines associated with a vending machine management apparatus,

wherein each of the plurality of vending machines computes a number of a product delivered by that vending machine and, when the number of the product delivered by a vending machine is less than a predetermined number for that product, the vending machine transmits a restocking request to the vending machine management apparatus, [[and]]

wherein the predetermined number is dynamically calculated prior to each restocking based upon a predicted time that a product will be sold out, and wherein said predicted time is based on a rate of sales of said product since a previous restocking, the predetermined number being dynamically calculated prior to each restocking to permit restocking to occur before the product will be sold out

~~wherein the predetermined number is determined based on a predicted time that a product will be sold out from the vending machine, the predetermined number being determined to allow a restocking to occur before the product will be sold out.~~

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8. (Previously Presented) The vending machine management system according to claim 7, further comprising a vending machine time management unit provided in each of the plurality of vending machines, the vending machine time management units being configured to manage time information.

9. (Previously Presented) The goods sales management system according to claim 1, wherein said vending machine management apparatus predicts a time when a stockout may occur.

10. (Previously Presented) The goods sales management system according to claim 9, wherein said vending machine management apparatus calculates the time when the stockout may occur based on sales conditions of the goods and the predetermined number of goods remaining.

11. (Previously Presented) The goods sales management system according to claim 10, wherein the sales condition of the goods comprises a length of time between a current restocking request and a next restocking request.

12. (Previously Presented) The goods sales management system according to claim 9, wherein said vending machine management apparatus calculates the time when the stockout may occur based on a time period when the number obtained by subtracting the number counted by said delivered-goods number counting means from the number set by said goods number setting means is less than the predetermined number of remaining goods.

13. (Previously Presented) The goods sales management system according to claim 1, wherein the predetermined number of remaining goods is dynamically calculated.

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14. (Previously Presented) The goods sales management method according to claim 4, further comprising dynamically calculating the predetermined number of remaining goods.
15. (Previously Presented) The vending machine management system according to claim 7, wherein the predetermined number of remaining goods is dynamically calculated.
16. (Previously Presented) The goods sales management system according to claim 2, wherein said vending machine receives the response signal from said response means, after transmitting said request for restocking the goods, then cuts off communications with said vending machine management apparatus.
17. (Previously Presented) The vending machine management system according to claim 8, further comprising a time adjustment unit provided in the vending machine management apparatus configured to manage vending system time information for the vending management system.
18. (Previously Presented) The vending machine management system according to claim 17, wherein a respective one of the plurality of vending machines transmits respective time information as well as the restocking request to said vending machine management apparatus.
19. (Previously Presented) The vending machine management system according to claim 18, wherein said vending machine management apparatus transmits said vending system time information managed to said respective vending machine transmitting said restocking request when said restocking request is received.
20. (Previously Presented) The vending machine management system according to claim 19, wherein said vending machine time management unit makes said vending system time information

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coincide with said vending system time information transmitted from said vending machine management apparatus.